

NORTH AMERICAN

WETLANDS

CONSERVATION ACT

# project flash

## North Carolina Partnership Receives \$50,000 for Wetlands Project

On June 9, 2004, the North American Wetlands Conservation Council reported to the Migratory Bird Conservation Commission that it had approved **\$50,000** in funding under the North American Wetlands Conservation Act's Small Grants Program for the **Little Tennessee River Riparian Restoration and Protection Project** in **North Carolina's Macon County in Congressional District 11**. The Act is nonregulatory and calls for voluntary partnerships to develop and implement wetlands and associated uplands conservation projects to benefit wildlife. Projects must meet certain biological criteria to be considered for funding, and partners must be able to match the grant request 1:1 with nonfederal funds.

This project is critical as an anchor to a system of riparian and floodplain protection efforts in the upper Little Tennessee River Basin. This area serves as an important flyway for migratory birds between the Ohio River Valley and the Atlantic Coast. The north-south oriented river penetrates the east-west oriented Southern Blue Ridge Mountains, providing a unique regional corridor, the "Little Tennessee Flyway," with over 150 bird species documented along the river in the past 2 years.

The project site is on a 25-mile reach of the river recognized as *the* Southern Blue Ridge aquatic biodiversity hotspot. The Land Trust for the Little Tennessee (Trust) currently owns 338 acres fronting on the river. This acreage contains about 75 acres of floodplain and more than 2 miles of river frontage. Project partners, including the Trust, Macon Soil and Water Conservation District, and Little Tennessee Watershed Association, will use their grant and **\$223,575** in matching funds to purchase an additional 28 acres. Following acquisition, they will restore the tract's 10-acre floodplain, wetland zones, and stream bank, which have been degraded due to land clearing, wetland ditching, and exotic plant introduction. Restoration work will largely involve revegetation with native woody and herbaceous bottomland species. The Trust will own the land and will use the protocol developed for other Trust sites to develop a long-term management plan for the tract.

American black duck, mallard, wood duck, and northern pintail are among the waterfowl species that will benefit from the restored wetland habitats. The lowland riparian woodland habitat enhancements will benefit species such as Acadian flycatcher, Louisiana waterthrush, Swainson's warbler, and potentially, cerulean warbler. The river also supports the largest population of the Appalachian elktoe (federally listed as endangered). The spotfin chub (federally listed as threatened) also occurs in the project area. The partners' efforts help to advance not only the conservation goals of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan's **Atlantic Coast Joint Venture** but also those of **Partners in Flight**.

For more information about this project, contact Paul Carlson, The Land Trust for the Little Tennessee, [ltlt@dnet.net](mailto:ltlt@dnet.net), (828) 524-2711, or Keith Morehouse, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, [keith\\_morehouse@fws.gov](mailto:keith_morehouse@fws.gov), (703) 358-1784.

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